

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Mr. James Huxtable of Douglas, Wyoming has notified the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Casper Field Office that he proposes to develop an industrial non-metallic mineral and decorative rock deposit located within the administrative boundary of the BLM's Casper Field Office. The proposed Huxtable quarry is located in the SW¼ of Section 33 in Township 32 North, Range 72 West, Converse County, Wyoming, as shown on Figure 1.1. Mr. Huxtable (project proponent) proposes to mine existing aggregate rock, limestone and quartzite resources for use in local construction-related activities and moss rock for decorative landscaping purposes within a 10-acre quarry site as described above. The mineral materials proposed for mining are owned by the United States of America while the surface estate at the proposed quarry site and along the 2.0 miles of proposed access (haul) road are owned by the project proponent. The *Materials Act of 1947*, as amended (30 USC 601 et seq.), and promulgating regulations found in Title 43 *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), Part 3600, govern federal mineral materials (such as sand, stone, gravel, rock, etc.) and authorize the BLM to sell federal mineral materials at fair market value.

While the surface estate within the Huxtable Quarry Project Area (HQPA) is owned by the project proponent, the mineral resources at the proposed quarry site are in federal ownership, thereby requiring the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze and disclose the impacts of the proposed mineral materials sale. This EA is being prepared pursuant to the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA), as amended (42 USC 4321 et seq.), and its implementing regulations found in Title 40 CFR Part 1500-1508, and BLM's *National Environmental Policy Act Handbook* (H-1790-1) (BLM 1988a). This EA assesses the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, and serves to guide the decision-making process.

The proposed Huxtable Quarry Mineral Materials Project would comply with all applicable local, state and federal rules and regulations. Table 1.1 lists the potential authorizing actions required for project compliance.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

The Huxtable Quarry Mineral Materials Project would provide mineral materials for construction-related activities and decorative landscaping. The project proponent has indicated that a commercial need exists for this material in the Douglas area that cannot be met by existing quarry sites. As a consequence, the project proponent has submitted a request to the BLM for a sale of industrial non-metallic mineral and decorative rock resources located in the SW¼ of Section 33, Township 32 North, Range 72 West in order to meet the growing demand for mineral materials in this area of Converse County.

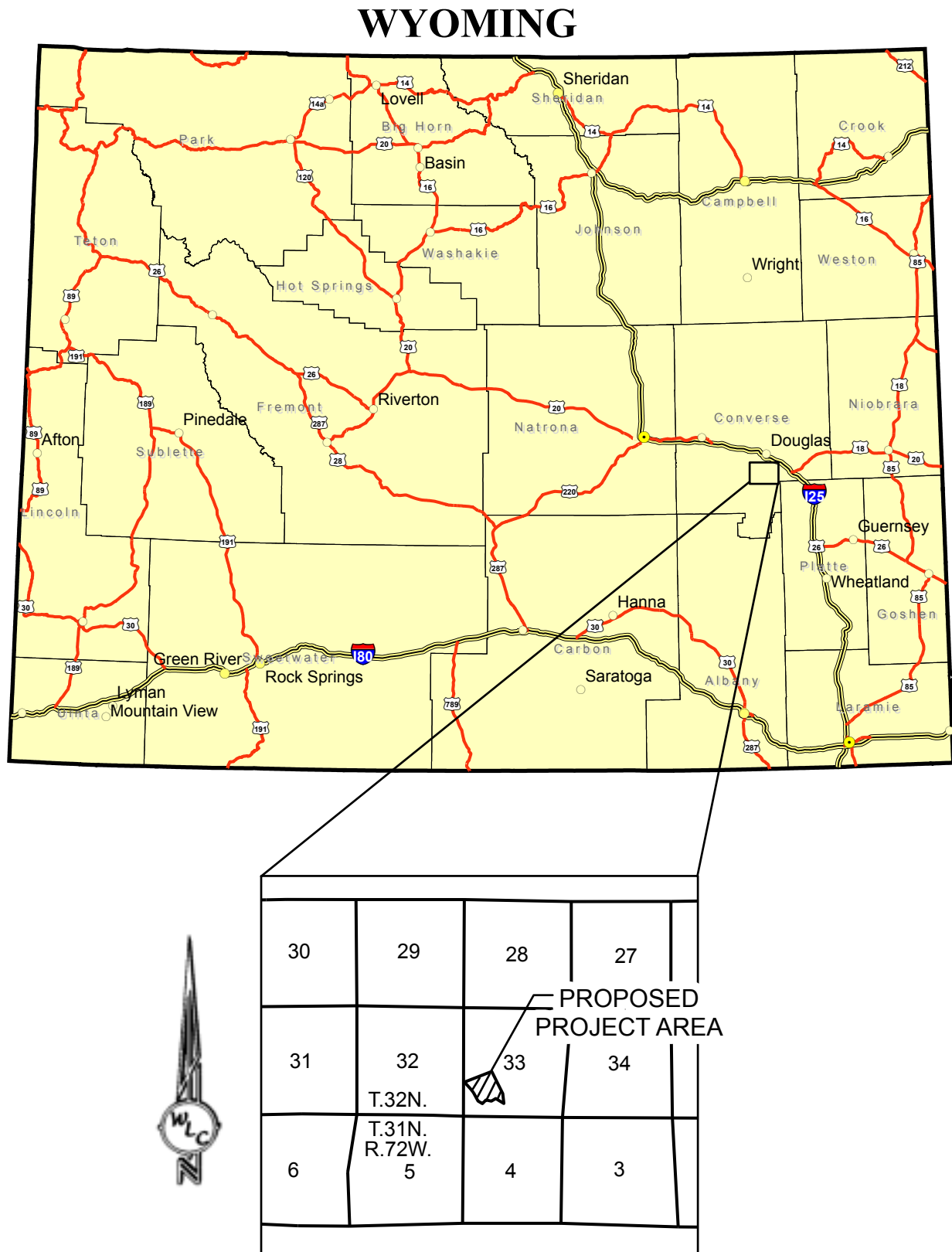


Figure 1.1 - General Location of the Proposed Project Area

Table 1.1 Potential Federal, State and Local Authorizing Actions; Huxtable Quarry Mineral Materials Project

| Agency | Nature of Action |
|---|---|
| Bureau of Land Management | NEPA compliance |
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers | Mineral sales contract |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Authorization to impact waters of the U.S. |
| Department of Environmental Quality, Land Quality Division | Review of potential impacts on federally listed threatened, endangered, and candidate species |
| Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Division | Small mine permit |
| Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Division | Permit to construct |
| Wyoming State Engineer's Office | Permit to operate |
| Wyoming Game and Fish Department | Storm Water Pollution Prevention Permit |
| Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office | Surface water appropriation permit(s) |
| Wyoming Department of Transportation | Ground water appropriation permit(s) |
| Converse County | Review of potential impacts on game and fish resources, including state-sensitive species |
| | Consultation with BLM and review of potential impacts on cultural resources |
| | State road modification agreement |
| | County road use and modification agreements |

1.3 CONFORMATION WITH LAND USE PLANS AND RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PLANS

1.3.1 Conformance with Land Use Plan

BLM planning for the project area is documented in the Platte River Resource Area (PRRA), Resource Management Plan (RMP) (BLM 1985b). The proposed action would take place in Resource Management Unit (RMU) 14: Remaining Platte River Resource Area. There is no primary management focus within this resource management unit. Rather, there are unit wide resource values with prescriptions addressing specific management needs where values exist. Specific management prescriptions applicable to the Proposed Action and alternatives include:

- ≠ M3: Salable Minerals. Mineral materials such as sand and gravel, moss rock, flagstone, and scoria will be available on demand for sale and for re-use, subject to conditions and stipulations developed case by case, so that efficient use can be made of the mineral resources. Materials in all low, moderate, and high potential areas are available except those in an area within 0.25 mile of the North Platte River for its entire length in the PRRA.

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- ∉ Surface Disturbance Mitigation Guidelines. Surface disturbance will be prohibited in any of the following areas or conditions. Exceptions, waivers, or modification of this limitation may be approved in writing, including documented supporting analysis, by the Authorized Officer.
- a. Slopes in excess of 25%.
 - b. Within important scenic areas identified in a land use plan (Class I and II Visual Resource Management Areas).
 - c. Within 500 feet of surface water and (or) riparian areas.
 - d. Within either 0.25 mile or the visual horizon (whichever is closer) of historic trails.
 - e. Construction with frozen material or during periods when the soil material is saturated or when watershed damage is likely to occur.
 - f. Within 500 feet of Interstate highways and 200 feet of other existing rights-of-way (i.e. U.S. and State highways, roads, railroads, pipelines, and power lines).
 - g. Within 0.25 mile of occupied dwellings.
 - h. Material sites.
- ∉ R4: Visual Resource Management. The BLM's visual resource management (VRM) system will be applied in the PRRA where required to mitigate impacts from surface development.
- ∉ WL3 Deer Habitat Management. To protect important big game winter habitat, activities or surface use will not be allowed from November 15 to April 30. Exception, waiver, or modification of this limitation in any year may be approved in writing when supported by documented analysis.
- ∉ WL7: Raptors. To protect important raptor nesting habitat, activities or surface use will not be allowed from February 1 to July 31 within 0.25 to 0.50 mile of an active nest. Exception, waiver, or modification of this limitation in any year may be approved in writing when supported by documented analysis.

The Surface Disturbance Mitigation Guidelines referenced above would not apply as none of these resource concerns would be affected by the Proposed Action or alternatives. The proposal to develop mineral materials is in conformance with the 1985 Platte River Resource Management Plan (BLM 1985).

1.3.2 Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality

The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ), Land Quality Division (LQD) administers and regulates mining and reclamation operations such as the proposed project, in conjunction with the BLM under a current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The WDEQ/LQD reviews and approves all proposed mining and reclamation plans under its jurisdiction. In addition, other WDEQ divisions including the Water Quality Division (WQD) and Air Quality Division (AQD) will review specific portions of the proposed quarry and reclamation plan, and, if the plans conform to and comply with applicable rules and regulations, specific environmental permits would be issued by the appropriate agency.

The project proponent has submitted applications to WDEQ's Air and Land Quality Divisions for approval of the 10-acre Huxtable quarry and these applications are currently pending review and approval.

1.3.3 Wyoming Department of Transportation

The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WDOT) regulates the construction of new access points (approaches) to/from existing highways within the State of Wyoming. The project proponent has received an approved access permit from the WDOT for the construction of an access approach to the Cold Springs Road (Wyoming State Highway 91) in the NW¹/₄NW¹/₄ of Section 28 in Township 32 North, Range 72 West.

1.3.4 Wyoming State Engineer's Office

The Wyoming State Engineer's Office (WSEO) regulates the appropriation of both surface and ground water within the State of Wyoming. The project proponent has proposed to use ground water produced from the Huxtable #2 water well (NW¹/₄NW¹/₄ of Section 33, T32N, R72W) for use in dust abatement on both the access (haul) road and in conjunction with crushing activities in the quarry. An enlargement (modification) of the existing ground water permit for the Huxtable #2 water well will be required authorizing the use of these waters for industrial purposes prior to the use of this water for dust abatement purposes.

1.3.5 Converse County

The proposed project conforms to the existing zoning for the subject area. In a letter dated January 31, 2005, Converse County Planning Director Paul Musselman indicated that Converse County does not have any zoning requirements regulating quarry operations.

1.4 SCOPING AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Public issues and comments regarding the proposed Huxtable Quarry Mineral Materials Project were solicited for incorporation into this analysis through the public scoping process. Scoping consisted of the publication of a public scoping notice and a formal public scoping meeting held in Douglas, Wyoming as summarized in Chapter 5.0 of this analysis document. Environmental and social issues of local importance associated with the project that were identified through the public scoping process are summarized as follows:

1. Potential impacts to air quality from fugitive dust emissions.
 2. Potential impacts to surface and ground water resources.
 3. Potential impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat in the area, including:
 - a) both game and non-game species (principally mule deer and the impacts to crucial mule deer winter range, raptor nesting habitat); and
 - b) threatened, endangered and sensitive plant and animal species and their habitats.
 4. Increased traffic on and associated potential impacts to existing state highways.
 5. Potential impacts associated with noise during quarrying operations.
 6. Potential damage to dwellings and structures from blasting operations.
 7. Potential health and safety concerns from exposure to elevated radon levels.
 8. Potential impacts to the scenic qualities of the area.
 9. Potential impacts of the quarry on property values in the area
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